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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 002691

SIPDIS

DEPT PASS TO AIT/W

DEPT FOR EAP/RSP/TC, OES/IHA

DHHS FOR OGH - ERICA ELVANDER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CASC](#) [TBIO](#) [OTRA](#) [SENV](#) [SOCI](#) [TW](#) [ESTH](#)

SUBJECT: TAIWAN: ENTEROVIRUS UPDATE

1. Summary. Thus far in 2005, Taiwan has 70 confirmed cases of enterovirus, representing a two-fold increase compared to the same period last year. Six of the 70 cases have resulted in death. All of the cases have occurred in children aged 5 and younger. Taiwan's Center for Disease Control (CDC) is hoping that the rise in numbers is more a result of improved diagnosis and reporting and less an indication of an actual rise in cases. The CDC expects the virus to peak within the next few weeks and then to drop off dramatically in the summer months. End Summary.

#### Background

2. Enterovirus, more commonly known as hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD), is a common illness of infants and children. It is rarely fatal in most places in the world. However, Taiwan has had outbreaks of a particularly virulent strain called eEnterovirus 71 (E71), which has led to fatalities every year since 1998.

3. Taiwan has followed the incidence of enterovirus very closely ever since 1998 when it experienced a major outbreak of the disease. The following table shows the number of lives claimed by E71.

Year	Deaths
1998	78
1999	9
2000	41
2001	58
2002	30
2003	8
2004	6

4. Taiwan's enterovirus 71 cases have tended to be concentrated in the central and southern parts of Taiwan and among infants. According to TCDC's monitoring record, the outbreak usually starts in mid-March and reaches the peak between late May and early June. It usually subsides during summer when schools are out and then increases again in September.

#### Current Status

5. So far in 2005, a total of 70 enterovirus cases have been confirmed, 40 of which have been identified as the substrain enterovirus 71. Six of the cases have resulted in death. All of the cases have been children five years of age and younger. Fourteen of the cases were in northern Taiwan, 39 in central Taiwan, 16 in southern Taiwan and 1 in eastern Taiwan.

#### Outlook

6. According to Taiwan's Center for Disease Control, the number of cases seen so far this year is of concern because it is twice as high as for the same period last year. The greatest rise in numbers occurred in May, a month later than usual. The CDC attributed the late season to an unusually cool winter. The CDC is hoping that the increase in numbers from last year is more a result of improved diagnosis and reporting and less an indication of an actual increase in cases. On a more optimistic note, the CDC pointed out that there has been no indication of group infections and surmised that the virus should be peaking within the next few weeks with a dramatic fall expected in the summer months.

#### Government Prevention Efforts

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17. In an effort to reduce the spread of infections of this largely childhood disease, the Department of Health instituted an awareness campaign in schools and kindergartens nationwide in April this year. Posters have been placed in kindergartens and schools urging teachers and education workers to improve campus sanitation and educate students about the importance of personal hygiene. DOH also routinely provides enterovirus training programs for the health workers throughout Taiwan. In addition, the CDC has collaborated with McDonalds in Taiwan to place signs in all McDonalds restaurants to promote hand washing prior to meals. Finally, following the recent heavy rains in Taiwan, DOH is also urging enhanced cleaning using disinfectants to prevent the spread of this and other diseases.

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